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Witness in Athens Trial Says Moscow Helped Finance Paper

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ATHENS, May 22 — A former business associate of the publisher of Greece's largest daily newspaper testified before an appeals court here today that Soviet intelligence officers, operating as representatives of the Soviet copyright agency, arranged to finance the paper's founding in 1981.

The witness, Yannis Yannikos, a member of the Greek Communist Party, appeared on behalf of Paul Anastasiades, a Cypriot-born journalist who is appealing a two-year jail sentence imposed in December, when he was convicted of libeling and defaming the publisher of the newspaper, Ethnos, through a book and a press release advertising it.

Mr. Anastasiades charged in his book, "Take the Nation in Your Hands," that Ethnos was set up in 1981 in cooperation with the K.G.B., the Soviet intelligence service, and that its publisher, George Bobolas, was an "agent of influence" for the Soviet Union.

The journalist, who writes under the name Paul Anastasi, is a correspondent for The Daily Telegraph of London and a part-time correspondent for The New York Times. He is free pending conclusion of the appeal proceedings, which entered their third day today.

Mr. Yannikos testified that, under a published agreement with the Russians, 15 percent of gross revenues from sales in Greece of the Soviet Encyclopedia and other Russian books

was to be paid them. Though more than 40,000 sets of the 34-volume reference work were sold, he said, the money was not paid Moscow, but was reinvested in projects such as the Ethnos newspaper.

In 1981, Mr. Yannikos brought legal action against Mr. Bobolas, his partner in publishing the Soviet Encyclopedia, after Mr. Yannikos was excluded from the publishing deal involving Ethnos.

During the trial of Mr. Anastasiades, which ended in December, Mr. Yannikos did not appear, pleading illness. Shortly afterward, it was announced that he and Mr. Bobolas had reached a financial settlement involving the sale of Mr. Yannikos's one-fourth share in the encyclopedia publishing venture.

In testimony last Friday, Mr. Bobolas acknowledged that no money had

been paid to the Russians, but he said this was because of dissatisfaction with the quality of slides the Russians supplied for publication.

But lawyers for Mr. Anastasiades showed the court copies of four contracts signed by Mr. Bobolas and Soviet representatives in 1978 and 1979 stating that the revenue would not be paid Moscow, but would be invested instead in new publishing activities.

Last Friday, Mr. Bobolas testified that sales of the encyclopedia had been sluggish. But the most recent contract, dated May 11, 1978, says that unexpectedly brisk book sales prompted the Russians to agree to reinvest only 70 percent of revenues and to distribute the remainder to "shareholders," including Mr. Bobolas.